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The rationale and modus operandi of the Urban Coalition are discussed. Activities are concentrated in four major areas: support of legislation, communications, organization of local community coalitions, and development of programs in housing, entrepreneurship, education, employment, etc. School superintendents should become involved in a relationship with local coalitions. (NH)

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The Urban Coalition, headed nationally by John Gardner, is a new organization with great potential and myriad implications for educational policy-makers in the nation's problem-plagued cities. Professor James A. Kelly of Teachers College, who also serves as an Executive Associate on the national staff of the Urban Coalition, discusses the modus operandi and underlying rationale of a fledgling organization that could well play a pivotal role in the amelioration of critical educational problems in the nation's crisis-laden cities.

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THE URBAN COALITION:

ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL SYSTEMS

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The Urban Coalition was originally the idea of the late Stephen Currier, founder of Urban America and one of America's distinguished--if little known--philanthropists. In 1967, Urban America joined with city mayors, and leaders from private sectors, to discuss ways in which important elements of the country could be drawn more actively into work on urban problems. The discussion particularly was aimed at attracting major business interests toward involvement in solution of urban problems. The Coalition was conceived of and outlined on paper prior to the outbreak of the Newark and Detroit riots of 1967, but it took public form shortly after those riots. Thus, the genesis of the organization was <u>not</u> originally anti-riot, as it has been interpreted occasionally because of the coincidence of timing.

In July and August of 1967, a twelve-hundred-person Convocation was held in Washington, drawing together

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representatives of five major segments of American society, and articulate on-lookers as well. The meeting included representatives of business, labor, civil rights, churches, municipal government, and militant community groups. Out of that convocation came the creation of the Urban Coalition and a Statement of Principles, Goals and Commitments summoning the participants and the nation to action. The statement outlines specific policies which the Urban Coalition supports in education: pre-school education; elementary and secondary education; compensatory education; coping with adult illiteracy; work-study programs; on-the-job training; increased economic opportunities for college attendance; and so on.

The Urban Coalition is governed by a 38-man Steering Committee made up of representatives of five sectors: business, labor, civil rights, religion, and municipal government. Leaders of the business community include Henry Ford II; David Rockefeller; Roy Ash, President of Litton Industries; and Gerald Phillippe, Chairman of the Board of General Electric. George Meany, Walter Reuther, and others represent labor leadership. Civil rights leadership on the Steering Committee includes Roy Wilkins, Whitney M. Young and A. Philip Randolph (who is co-chairman of the Committee). Arthur Flemming, President of the National Council of Churches and former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, is one of the representatives of church leadership on the Committee. City mayors--among them John

Lindsay of New York, Ivan Allen of Atlanta, and Richard Daley of Chicago--make up the fifth segment of the Coalition's Steering Committee.

In March of this year, John Gardner became Chairman of the Urban Coalition after his resignation as Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare. At that time the Coalition had a staff of only three men in Washington. Mr. Gardner has expanded the staff considerably and is personally committed to advancing the cause for which the Coalition was created.

The Coalition's Steering Committee has created several task forces of prominent people in various fields. For example, the Task Force on Educational Disparities, following the Coalition principle of sector representation, is co-chaired by Roy Wilkins, Executive Director, NAACP; Roy Ash, President of Litton Industries; and Arthur Flemming, President of the National Council of Churches and former Secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare. This task force--which includes city-school superintendents as well as college and university presidents--meets periodically and advises the Coalition on educational policy problems.

The Urban Coalition is not a donor, gathering more and more money to give away. Its limited funding--all of it from non-governmental sources--is restricted primarily to the operating expenses of the national office. It does not operate programs, and it seeks no "turf". The Coalition, I

emphasize, is not a Federal agency. It has no Federal money. Funding is obtained from foundations, corporations, unions, and church groups.

At the national level, activities are concentrated in four major areas. The first of these is support of legislation: a corporation has been created (separate from the Coalition for tax purposes) to advocate legislation. For instance, during 1968 this corporation supported two fiscal positions relevant to education: the need for a tax increase of at least ten percent; and the fight to avoid budget reductions in the field of education and in several other fields dealing with social and urban problems.

The Urban Coalition will not have the often-caricatured, behind-the-scenes, politician-type of lobbyist working in Washington. Primarily, action will consist of the efforts of the principals on the Steering Committee and the organizations which they represent; influence will be exerted through the persons who have assumed leadership positions in local coalitions, who will contact their local congressmen and legislators.

The second area of activity is communications. The Advertising Council is about to begin a major campaign which has been described as the largest and most intensive effort of its kind since the World War II bond campaigns. It focuses on two themes: "If you think there is nothing you can do about the urban crisis, think again"; and the program adopted by the New York Urban Coalition and a number

of other local coalitions: "Give money, give jobs, give a damn".

The third major area of activity lies in helping communities to form, organize and operate effective local coalitions. We believe very strongly that the Urban Coalition must be active at the local level. We do not intend to hand out a series of canned programs from the national level to the local, nor will we require local coalitions to adopt specific programs, although we do agree on general goals. We have a staff available to local communities for discussions and meetings, so that each local coalition need not relive all of the problems of raising money and getting the first staff on board. The national staff will also communicate to local coalitions the broad framework of policy contained in the Statement of Principles to which we expect they will be committed.

The Coalition is not designed to develop centrally planned solutions, which--once created--will be placed behind a facade of community participation and uniform community agreement. Local coalitions must allow all segments of the community itself to participate in the process of identifying problems, setting priorities and selecting programs of action.

The national staff also has a very important role to play in helping local coalitions become broadly representative of the communities in which they are located. This means that not only the five segments of American life

mentioned at the national level are involved in most local coalitions, but also the professions, academic institutions and minority group leaders, both moderate and militant.

At the present time, about thirty-three cities have functioning local coalitions. These cities range in size from New York City to Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Each local coalition is autonomous, programatically and fiscally.

The fourth area of the Urban Coalition's activity is maintaining a staff to develop programs in the fields of housing, entrepreneurship, employment, education, etc., in order to make these available to local coalitions; and to suggest activities, means of communication, and legislation which are likely to be useful in solving urban problems.

The relationship between local coalitions and superintendents of city school districts deserves comment here. Some of the early local Urban Coalitions did not have superintendents of schools on their Steering Committees; neither the Steering Committee--the combined leadership of the community's private sectors--nor the school superintendents appeared to be disturbed by this arrangement. School superintendents must realize that an important new linkage among community leaders is represented in local coalitions, and that these coalitions will be active in considering educational problems as well as other urban problems. Superintendents should view the local coalition as a new opportunity to build working relations with top echelons of community leadership which are not normally involved in

school affairs.

This indeed may represent a departure from the stereotyped view of traditional school "politics". In the past, public support has been sought only at tax and bond elections, and then only to ratify a previously made decision. The coalition idea suggests another view of school politics--one which asserts, "We want to be part of the top leadership group in this community; and we want the support and the criticism of this broader coalition."

In this spirit, urban coalitions seek the participation of public school officials in America's cities. The coalition movement is a plausible strategy for saving our fragmented cities; but in order to work it must enlist the active involvement of <u>all</u> of the leaders of each community.